1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

291 [439] Raw cotton and cotton sheeting have long been imported, and still are, but the toga (shamma), probably the oldest of the Abyssinian cotton garments, is made domestically, from cotton spun by the housewife and woven on the handloom of the weaver.

The cotton clothing now considered "traditional" is [765] always white. The explanation given by the pious is that white is the expression of mourning, because of the passing from the earth of Jesus Christ.

[294] Tailoring is done by poor semi-specialized Amhara men at "big markets". Garments are made with great care, to follow the traditional style and also fit well. There are no new fashions in these costumes, for the prevalent pattern is conservative: to be properly dressed for the occasion, in the style of one's forebears. Variety exists in trousers: the jodphurs which reach to the bare feet, as former clothing of feudal lords, are more prestigeful than the wide peasant trousers that narrow to the leg just below the knee. The shirt, worn kneelength above the trousers, similarly narrows on the forearm, and is therefore called "ej tebab" (lit. narrow-sleeve) in the vernacular, instead of "qamis", the proper name (possibly from French chemise, though no Amhara would admit this foreign name for his "traditional" shirt). The only untailored garment is the toga, but this is used for expression of moods and situational conditions (see "language of the shamma").

●296 Laundering is done in or near riverbeds, or brooks, by women, housewives or female ex-slaves, using the dried

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

296 and crushed, potash--containing saponaria seed called "endod" (Phytolacca abyssinica) which grows wild, but the locations of which are carefully remembered for "harvest". The crushed seed is mixed with cold water on the slightly concave top of a rock, or in a cowskin. The cloth is kneaded, stamped on with feet, until a good foam develops. This is done several times; then the garment is rinsed, and bleached by the sun. In time the cloth does become grayish, particularly the peasant trousers which are used more than the festive shirt and jodphurs, but the native soap-plant is kinder to the material than the coarse European laundry soap now available at big markets.

291 There is little basic difference between the garments worn by the sexes. Jodphurs may be worn by travelling ladies of feudal lords, since there is no side-saddle, but the peasant woman never wears trousers. Also, instead of the shirt, women generally wear a long loose heavy cotton gown from shoulder to feet, though formerly the peasant women used to leave the upper body bare, as a symbol of "respect" (as peasant males used to do on most occasions), and for comfort. [853] Above the tied waist, this garment is still loose, and two-year old infants not yet weaned can walk up to their seated mothers and help themselves to nourishment and comfort by simply pulling the unobstructed breast out. Women wear the toga just as men do, but drape it differently on certain occasions.

The old type of trousers, wide at the hips and tapering to leg size just below the knee ("bat tähulät") has survived the introduction of white jodphurs ("surri") only

291 are only of the last items to increase in prestige in very recent years, due to growing imitation of living patters of Addis Ababa. Coptic churches still require removal of footgear.

G. Sanitation.

515 Two traditional traits of health care and sanitation have already been mentioned in connection with the direct use of natural products: polishing teeth, and washing clothes.

[824] Hardwood twigs such as wild olive (Olea chrysophylla) called "wäyra", or of the "ahya" or "äçhema" bush (also softer ones of the type that Somali use in lower elevations) are held between the lips, by men or women, after meals. Even old men (in rural Ethiopia this means men over fifty) have most of their teeth as a result, with little sign of wear or decay. Much of this is due to this habit of polishing teeth and gums at odd moments, much as an American might chew gum. Before this polishing, the end of the twig to be used is masticated thoroughly, and the fibrous ends are then used. The Amhara belief is that this keeps the teeth in sharp condition--they do not do it with the idea of cleaning food remnants out of the mouth. The mental association is than of a bird sharpening its beak.

[296] [824] Already noted also is the use of the potash content of the seed of the "endod" bush (Sapindus abyssinica, or, Phytolacca abyssinica), for laundering and washing.

Little more positive statements can be made about sanitation. When water is short in the dry season, which

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

291 The Abyssinian lady and gentleman are frequently to be seen with a black satin three-quarter mantle, ornamented by a little gold braid round the neck and generally a coloured silk lining. In the rainy season a black woollen-hooded cape or *burnous* is donned by all classes, women wearing the hood at the back, and men sporting theirs on their left shoulder. The *burnous* is also a sign of mourning, for which purpose people of every class wear it.

765 515 296 A further, and less pleasant, sign of mourning is for the bereaved one to refrain from washing his clothes; but I only observed this practice in connection with servants and persons of humble position. Ordinarily they are very keen on washing their white garments, and even on trek there was a great "clean-up" whenever we stayed in camp for an extra twenty-four hours. The day before our return into Addis was always the occasion for the most lavish use of soap and water, and the *safari* on arrival looked really quite smart, the men all having donned spotless white *chammas*, shirt, and trousers for the occasion, when, I am bound to say, they looked externally a good deal cleaner than our travel-stained garments allowed us to do.

293 A cartridge belt of various colours and designs, from the plain native leather to the gold and silk embroidered specimen, is more or less generally worn by the men, and its value is also often an indication to the position or means of the wearer. In its place women use a girdle of some sort, to which is attached their keys, ear-cleaners, head-scratchers, and small silver ornaments. Parasols of neatly plaited grass, intermixed with coloured cottons, are carried frequently by both sexes in all seasons. These are quite picturesque, and no doubt serve their

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

in January. But the giant of holidays in this season is Epiphany, about a fortnight after Christmas. The holiday commemorates the baptism of Jesus; the name of the holiday, *Ṭimqat,* means "baptism." In preparation for Ṭimqat new clothes are given to children and the adults' *shammā,* grown very gray over the months, are washed in every household.

The program for Ṭimqat is long and complicated. At sunset on the eve of the holiday, the people don their white clothes and repair to the local church, from whence they escort the *tābot* to a place where it will spend the night—near some stream or pool. They go home for supper, and return to that site for singing and dancing until late at night. About two o'clock in the morning Mass is performed, after which quantities of *dābo* and *ṭallā* are consumed. Toward dawn, or shortly after, the clergy bless the water and sprinkle it on those assembled. Many like to bathe in the sanctified water at this time. It is the occasion for baptizing the children of syphilitic mothers and those who want to be rebaptized.

By noon on Ṭimqat Day a large crowd has assembled at the ritual site, those who went home for a little sleep having returned, and the holy ark is escorted back to its church in colorful procession. The clergy, bearing robes and umbrellas of many hues, perform rollicking dances and songs; the elders march solemnly with their weapons, attended by middle-aged men singing a long-drawn, low-pitched *haaa hooo;* and the children run about with sticks and games. Dressed up in their finest, the women chatter excitedly on their one real day of freedom in the year. The young braves leap up and down in spirited dances, tirelessly repeating rhythmic songs. When the holy ark has been safely restored to its dwelling-place, everyone goes home for feasting. In the meantime, the eyes of gamesome men and women have met and secret rendezvous have been arranged.

Ṭimqat ushers in a season of weddings, which comes to an abrupt end with the onset of the great fast before Easter. For eight long weeks, body and spirit are depressed by the heavy fasting requirements. The mood reaches a climax in the final week of Lent. Then no heavy work is allowed, and the more devout peasants go to church many times and intensify their daily schedule of prayers. Total abstinence is practiced for the forty-eight hours preceding the final Mass, performed in the middle of the night before Easter.

Gluttony follows this long deprivation. It is a season of the highest spirits. For eight weeks the inexorable requirement to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays is waived. The bins are full with the harvest of wheat, barley, and chick-peas. New crops of pulse start to appear in the fields. It is the most favored time of all for weddings.

And then, as the Amhara themselves view it, June brings another time of sadness. With the onset of the heavy rains come attacks of malaria in the lowlands, typhus in the highlands. Swollen streams make travel difficult and